

16 Must-Try Lunch & Dessert Spots in San Diego

Updated on October 4, 2016 by VacationIdea Staff



San Diego restaurants offer visitors a variety of flavors, from American cuisine and award-winning barbeque to amazing Italian pizza and handmade sausages.

Families and couples can order delicious burgers, tacos, Mexican street food, farm-to-table fare, fresh seafood and vegetarian favorites. You may also like: [Best Things to Do in San Diego](#).



The centrally located, award-winning Bertrand at Mister A's penthouse restaurant offers fine American cuisine and spectacular views of San Diego, including the skyline, bay, Balboa Park, Coronado, Point Loma, and the zoo. Relish in the amazing flavors of the classic lobster bisque, steak tartare, or gourmet beer-battered fish and chips. French restaurateur, Bertrand Hug, bought Mister A's in 2000 and invited Chef de Cuisine, Stephane Voitzwinkler, to create simplistic, yet delectable dishes with European influences made from seasonally available, locally-sourced ingredients. Enjoy an atmosphere of casual elegance at Bertrand at Mister A's, located on Fifth Avenue in downtown San Diego.

2550 Fifth Avenue Twelfth Floor, San Diego, California 92103, [website](#), Phone: 619-239-1377

Top romantic spots in San Diego: [The Botanical Building in Balboa Park](#), [Torrey Pines State Reserve](#) and [Seaport Village](#)

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» Isola Pizza Bar



Isola Pizza Bar has been serving fresh, updated Italian food in downtown San Diego since 2012. Start off lunch with the scrumptious Fave e Cavolo appetizer, before savoring a sensational Prosciutto E Arugula pizza. The restaurant also serves exquisite wine from Pietro Rinaldi Winery in Italy's Piemonte region. Chef and owner, Massimo Tenino, follows after his grandmother Isola's passion for fresh, simplistic ingredients so much as to name his restaurant after her. Isola Pizza Bar is located on India Street, in the heart of little Italy.

1526 India St, San Diego, California 92101, [website](#), Phone: 619-255-4230

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» Hash House A Go Go



Hash House A Go Go – San Diego has been dishing up heaping portions of old, farm fresh recipes with a twist since 2000. Stop in for the unbelievable Sage Fried Chicken (and bacon waffles) or a one-pound stuffed burger. Executive Chef, Craig “Andy” Beardslee brings the flavor with his tasty, award-winning creations, while President, Johnny Rivera, ensures that everyone who visits enjoys an entertaining dining experience. Located on 5th Avenue, not far from the San Diego Zoo, Hash House A Go Go has been featured on popular TV shows such as Rachael Ray’s Rachael’s Vacation.

3628 Fifth Ave, San Diego, California 92103, [website](#), Phone: 619-298-4646

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» The Patio on Goldfinch



The recently-opened Patio on Goldfinch offers extraordinary American cuisine and seafood, just minutes from downtown San Diego. Pop in for lunch and try a tasty vegetarian flatbread, the famous 30 Buck Chuck gourmet burger, or the restaurant’s version of Tijuana Dogs and Rally Fries – a local favorite. And wash it all down with a fresh, local beer or a craft cocktail. Owner and real estate expert, Gina Champion-Cain opened the restaurant just last year with Executive Chef, John Medall, who creates unbelievable dishes made from seasonally-available, locally-sourced ingredients. The Patio on Goldfinch is located on Goldfinch Street, just minutes from downtown.

4020 Goldfinch Street, San Diego, California 92103, [website](#), Phone: 619-501-5090

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» Breakfast Republic



Breakfast Republic is spacious, stylish and trendy, with two lovely patios and a 20-tap chrome beer tower. It serves a spectacular breakfast from 7 am to 3 pm, hence the reason for beer on tap. Beer also goes very well with some of their creations such as Shrimp & Grits Breakfast, Chicken Wing Breakfast Bowls, and Breakfast Mac 'n Cheese.

You can also find good old classics and interesting takes on everyone's favorites such as Oreo Pancakes and S'mores French Toast. The place is unpretentious and service is great and it is quickly becoming a favorite destination for that most important meal of the day.

2730 University Ave, San Diego, CA 92104, [website](#), Phone: 619-642-0299

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» Magnolia Tap & Kitchen



Enjoy Southern-influenced dishes with a California twist at Magnolia Tap & Kitchen in downtown San Diego. Start off with garlic duck fries, dive into delectable carnitas, and grab a slice of pecan pie for dessert.

The restaurant opened in 2013 and was designed after the historic Magnolia Saloon, which once shared the same street corner in the 1880's.

You can also enjoy incredible live music in the relaxed, rustic chic atmosphere at Magnolia Tap & Kitchen.

624 E St, San Diego, California 92101, [website](#), Phone: 619-255-0925

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» The Mission



The Mission serves affordable Chino-Latino cuisine that is tasty as well as healthy. From quesadillas and wraps to gluten-free and vegetarian options, there is plenty to choose from at this vibrant urban bistro. Fay Nakanishi, Deborah Helm, and Thomas Fitzpatrick opened their first restaurant in Mission Beach in 1997, and have since expanded to two additional locations: in North Park and SoMa East Village. The Mission is a must-try if you are looking for healthy lunch options in San Diego.

3795 Mission Boulevard, San Diego, California 92109, [website](#), Phone: 858-488-9060

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For farm-to-table cuisine and a fun, high energy atmosphere, check out San Diego’s PrepKitchen Little Italy. Enjoy pleasant views from its second-floor perch, while sipping an acclaimed cocktail and dining on award-winning dishes. Savor the Roasted Pork Belly Banh Mi or Fusilli Bolognese– all made with fresh, humane, sustainable ingredients. Entrepreneur, Arturo Kassel, and his friend, Chef Ryan Johnston, opened the Little Italy branch of the PrepKitchen chain in 2012, expanding on their passion for “good food, good drinks, and great people”. As you might have guessed, the restaurant is nestled in the heart of San Diego’s history Little Italy district on India and Date Streets.

1660 India St, San Diego, California 92101, [website](#), Phone: 619-398-8383

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One of the best things about places that are open 24 hours is that you meet some interesting people who crave pancakes at 4 am. Another great thing is to be able to have those pancakes any time of the day or night. The dining room at Brian's is inviting and cozy, with an open kitchen where you can watch the magic happen, and unique features such as a classic mahogany bar and a crystal chandelier for a touch of class.

The menu is extensive, so there is something for everyone and no breakfast comfort food is spared. Go for a classic omelet or indulge in the Crab Cake Benedict, you will be equally satisfied. They use fresh eggs, real butter and buttermilk, and you can taste the difference.

828 Sixth Ave, San Diego, CA 92101, [website](#), Phone: 619-702-8410

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Serving a diverse selection of tacos, salads, chips and salsas, Puesto is a Mexican street food eatery perfect for those who like the rich and spicy flavors of Mexican cuisine. Order a Filet Mignon taco which comes with melted cheese, avocado and spicy jalapeno. Or try a Tuna Asada taco with guacamole and cilantro. The restaurant serves a varied choice of drinks to accompany your meal, including wine, beer, tequila and specialty cocktails.

789 West Harbor Dr., San Diego, California 92101, [website](#), Phone: 619-233-8880

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>> Carnitas' Snack Shack



If you like bacon, pulled pork, and other pork dishes, you're going to love Carnitas' Snack Shack, located in San Diego's North Park neighborhood. They serve "slow food-inspired, pork-centric, American cuisine and snacks", as well as local craft beers. Try classics, like the Triple Threat Pork Sandwich or the Snack Shack Cuban. San Diego's Chef Hanis Covin, locally known for his culinary talents, and restaurateur, Sara Stroud, who co-owns Chinois San Diego, opened Carnitas' Snack Shack in 2011– and they run the place with the help of their famous pet mini-pig. Their menu changes daily because they use only the freshest, locally-sourced ingredients available.

2632 University Avenue, San Diego, California 92104, [website](#), Phone: 619-294-7675

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Osteria Panevino is the oldest Italian restaurant in San Diego’s Gaslamp district and offers authentic Tuscan food themes – including fresh bread, pasta, and desserts. Relish the delectable ossobuco, stuffed Portobello caprese sandwich, or the spinach and cheese ravioli. They also serve an award-winning collection of domestic and Italian wines. Sicilian-born Chef and owner, Vincenzo Lo Verso, also co-owns Greystone the Steakhouse. He has designed this charming restaurant based on the feel of a traditional Tuscan farmhouse. Enjoy the casual atmosphere of a Tuscan Osteria at Osteria Panevino, located downtown on Fifth Avenue.

722 5th Avenue, San Diego, California 92115, [website](#), Phone: 619-595-7959

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The Mastiff Sausage Company food truck serves phenomenal handmade craft sausages and other foods – all made from scratch, using ingredients from both their own garden and other local sources. Track them down and try the Mastiff Classic Bratwurst, a Protein Plate, or the Beet Reuben. And don't miss the Mastiff fries. The 25-foot Grumman Olsen Step Van is outfitted with a fully-equipped commercial kitchen inside. Designed by Jacob Bartlett and Chef Eric Gallerstein, Mastiff Sausage Company hit the streets a few years ago. Their calendar of their daily locations is available on their website.

2820 Historic Decatur Rd, San Diego, California 92106, [website](#), Phone: 760-504-3834

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» The Great Maple



The Great Maple is located in San Diego’s Hillcrest district and offers award-winning, seasonal American fare with European influences, delectable cocktails, and delicious pie. Stop into this unique “European dinette” for one of their fresh-made, maple bacon donuts, vegan hash or fried goat cheese squash blossom. Hash House A Go Go’s Johnny Rivera opened this chic eatery in 2013 with the same passion for entertainment while Chef Carmine Lopez mans the kitchen. Enjoy the swanky 1960s vibe at The Great Maple, which can be found at the intersection of Washington and Cleveland Streets.

1451 Washington St., San Diego, California 92103, [website](#), Phone: 619-255-2282

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» Slater's 50/50



No one takes burgers, bacon, and beer more seriously than Slater's 50/50 in San Diego, who specializes in this trifecta of tastiness. Their "Original 50/50 Patty" – 50% ground bacon and 50% ground beef – has won numerous awards and is made from only the finest, hormone- and antibiotic-free Holstein beef from a local, sustainable farm. Customize it with toppings of your choice and wash it down with one of their hundreds of beer options. Beer, bacon, and burger enthusiast and SDSU graduate, Scott Slater, opened this location (in Liberty Station, near Ace Hardware) on Dewey Road in 2011.

2750 Dewey Rd. #193, San Diego, California 92106, [website](#), Phone: 619-398-2600

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Phil's BBQ has been serving up its mouth-watering, award-winning barbeque recipes in the San Diego area since 1998. Famous not only for their amazing mesquite-grilled baby back ribs and beef ribs, their chicken and sandwiches are delicious as well. Owner, Phil Pace, has absolutely mastered a from-scratch, top secret recipe for rubs and sauces and says his restaurant has served over a million pounds of his signature barbeque sauce. Enjoy a casual, relaxed lunch at any of their five locations in the San Diego area: Point Loma, San Marcos, Santee, Petco Park, and San Diego International Airport.

579 Grand Avenue, San Marcos, California 92078, [website](#), Phone: 760-759-1400

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